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ABSTRACT

Forty-two students attending a centralized program for the trainable mentally retarded were placed in satellite units in elementary schools. After 2 years teachers reported on the extent of integration, changes in behavior, play with nonretarded students, and their feelings about the change. Parents were interviewed about their feelings before and after the change, behavior at home, and further changes needed. The program was generally successful in providing integration opportunities while maintaining a specialized program. Ensuring integration may require more central direction. A more detailed curriculum is needed to ensure comparability of programs for students changing schools. (Author)

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ESTABLISHMENT OF CLASSES FOR THE TRAINABLE MENTALLY RETARDED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: FOLLOW-UP AFTER TWO YEARS

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INTRODUCTION

A) Reasons for Changing the Program for the Retarded

Until 1978, the majority of Trainable Mentally Retarded students in Kent County attended a school in Chatham in the centre of the county. Since the school was on its own site there was no contact between Trainable Mentally Retarded students and students in other schools. On very rare occasions a student could be transferred to another program such as Opportunity, but there was no integration of any kind.

The population of the school had grown steadily since it was taken over by the Board of Education in 1969. The classrooms were small and the pupil-teacher ratio was rising. Since some students lived up to 25 miles from the school, their bus pick-up times were early and it was possible for a student to spend three hours a day on the bus. At the same time that concerns about bussing time and overcrowding were increasing, concerns were also increasing that the needs of the Trainable Mentally Retarded students could not be met in a program in which they were isolated from other students, whether the concept adopted was that of "normalization" or "least restrictive environment". It was felt that retarded students should have the same opportunity as other special education students for integration and to attend a school as close to home as possible.

The result of the coincidence of these concerns was a decision to set up "satellite" programs in a number of elementary schools. Some experience had already been gained which suggested that this would be feasible. In 1972, two classes had been set up in an elementary school for Trainable Mentally Retarded students of 15 years or older. This had been very

successful.

In addition to the large school for retarded students in Chatham, the Board of Education had taken over, in 1969, a small two-room school for the retarded near one of the smaller towns. This school had been maintained until 1976 when the two classes, with the same teachers, were moved to an elementary school in town. This move was also successful.

Although useful experience was gained in making these two changes, what could be learned was limited since, in one case only older students were involved and, in the other, the students had, to some extent, merely changed buildings since the classes remained with the same teachers. However, the success of these changes suggested that the contemplated satellite programs could also be successful.

In contemplating this change, the placement of self-contained classes in a regular elementary school was not considered to be, in itself, integration of retarded students. It was considered that such a move would present opportunities for integration.

B) Establishment of the Satellite Program

Four satellite units were set up. Three of these had two teachers and one unit had only one teacher (Location 3). All units had one teacher aide. All teachers selected for satellite units had previously taught in the school for the retarded.

Attempts were made to locate each unit in a school which already had and Opportunity Program. It was hoped that this would increase the likelihood of integration. However, it proved to be impossible in one case to find accommodation in such a school. As a result one unit was located in a school which had no special education classes (Location 1).

Every student was considered suitable for placement in a satellite program unless it could be shown that his needs could not be met by the satellite program. As a result of this criterion, only a small proportion of students were not placed in the satellite program. Students who could not, because of special needs, be placed in a satellite program were retained in their old school which became a new centralized program for those students who were very low functioning or who required a highly specalized program.

It is worth noting that although the selection procedure emphasized a move whenever it was felt to be at all possible, none of the students selected for a move were ever returned to the centralized program.

All teachers selected for the new satellite units had previously taught for several years in the school for the retarded and had had previous contact with many of the students who were to be in their classes. When they moved to their new school all teachers came entirely under the jurisdiction of the principal of that school in the same way that other special education teachers did.

The specific organization of the program within a school was made the responsibility of the principal and teacher. All decisions about integration of individual students were left to the school, unless integration was required by the Special Education Program Placement and Review Committee.

It was decided at an early stage in planning for the new program that no specific preparation would be given to the staff or students in the schools selected to receive the satellite units. It was considered that such preparation might over-emphasize to staff and students the differences between the new students and those already in the school.

C) Parental Reactions to the Decision to Establish the Satellite Program

After approval was given by the Board of Education to the change, parents of all students in the program for the retarded were invited to a general meeting. While it had been expected that some parents might not be enthusiastic, educators present at the meeting were surprised at the number of parents who appeared to be unenthusiastic and even fearful about the change. They made it clear that they were unhappy at the break-up of a school in which they had confidence in exchange for an uncertain future.

It was the expression by parents of their unease about the change which suggested that a follow-up should be done to see what changes in attitudes might take place at a later date. No survey of attitudes of parents was done at the time since it was felt that this might have the effect of increasing the anxiety of parents.

D) Description of the Study

Two years after the setting up of the satellite units, each teacher was interviewed individually and information was gathered on all students in the teacher's class at that time. Sixty-one students were attending these units.

Contact was made with the parents of the 42 students who had been in the centralized program and were still in the satellite program two years later. Information was gathered on transportation, the child's adjustment to the new school, the parents' feelings about the change in program and any criticisms which they wished to make.

INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

In the first part of the teacher interview, information was gathered on the extent to which the class as a whole was integrated with other classes in the school, amount of contact with other teachers for instruction, a general impression of behaviour changes and an opinion on the effects of the presence of the retarded students in the school.

In the second part of the interview, information was gathered on the extent to which each student was integrated individually in other classes, and amount of play in the yard with non-retarded students. For those students who had previously been in the centralized program, information was gathered on changes in behaviour and other changes such as improved toileting, dress, etc.

A frequent comment during the interview was the problem created when other teachers felt unable to discipline the retarded students. It would appear that this problem has diminished but it may have contributed to poorer behaviour from some retarded students during the first few months of the program.

Apart from the teachers in Location 4, all teachers reported that they had been well received by students and staff in their new schools.

It was apparent from comments made by teachers during the interviews that they were pleased with the change in program location. They felt it had been very successful and, except for teachers in Location 4, felt that it had been beneficial for their students and for them.

A number of teachers reported that parents had become more involved, particularly those whose children were attending a school much closer to home.

A) Teacher Interview, Part 1

i) Although one of the aims in establishing the satellite programs was to increase the possibilities of integration, it was clearly understood that such integration would affect a minority of students. However, it was felt that one way of achieving some integration for all students would be the combination of the classes for the retarded with other classes within the school.

The extent to which classes in the satellite units had contact with other classes is shown in Table 1. Information is given on each class since the extent of contact could vary between classes in the same school. It should be noted that students in the satellite units took part in all whole-school activities, such as assemblies.

It will be seen in Table 1 that there was considerable variation between locations in the extent to which there was contact between classes for the retarded and other classes. Locations 2 and 3 had regularly scheduled contact while the other locations had irregular contact which seemed to be confined to such activities as movies where interaction between students is likely to be at a minimum.

ii) Contact With Other Teachers

The extent to which these students had contact, as a class, with other teachers was left to the school since this had to be built into the school's overall organization. Table 2 shows that students had regularly scheduled contact for extended periods in all locations except Location 1.

TABLE 1

Contact by Class as a Whole With Other Classes

Location	Class	Contact with other classes
1	1	Irregular, possibly 60 minutes a week.
	2	None, except for extra-curriculur square dancing.
2	1	Physical Education with Kindergarten. Movies, parties with Opportunity Class.
	2	Physical Education with Opportunity Class.
3	1	Home Economics or shop with Opportunity Class.
4	1	None, except for movies.
	2	None.

TABLE 2

Amount of Contact With Other Teachers for Instruction

Location	Class	Amount of Contact With Other Teachers
1	1	1. Library (40)[1]
	2	None
2	1	1. Physical Education (80) 2. Music (80) 3. Library (40)
	2	1. Physical Education (80) 2. Music (80) 3. Library (40)
3		1. Home Economics (160) 2. Library (40) 3. Shop (160)
4	1	1. Physical Education (60) 2. Library (60) 3. Music (40)
	2	1. Physical Education (60) 2. Library (60) 3. Music (40) 4. Shop (boys) (40)

1 Time, in minutes, per week.

The elementary teachers' contract in Kent County includes a provision for 200 minutes preparation time for each teachers. As a result, in three locations student contact with other teachers is related to the length of preparation time.

It is clear that the burden of contact with these students has fallen on teachers of library, music, physical education and shop. Some of these teachers were apprehensive initially but have adapted well to teaching at this level. In addition to providing preparation time for teachers of the retarded, it seems quite possible that this contact with other teachers has been beneficial in avoiding isolation of these satellite units within a school.

iii) Overall Changes in Behaviour

Teachers were asked to give their impressions of any general changes in behaviour of their students. Behaviour of individual students was considered later in the interview.

Typical comments are noted in Table 3. Teachers in Location 4 were most negative in their comments and tended to see a deterioration in behaviour with more swearing, fighting and teasing between retarded students as well as between retarded and non-retarded students.

There was general agreement among teachers that swearing had increased considerably since the change in program location. In this the retarded students were copying "normal" students and appears to be part of the price of "normalization".

TABLE 3

Overall Changes in Behaviour

Location	Teacher Comments
1	Less dependent. More aware of normal behaviour. Some swearing.
2	Better language development. More initiative, more motivated. More advanced than students were at that age in the centralized program. Some swearing.
3	No change.
4	More aware of other people. Behaviour worse-swearing, fighting, teasing.

v) Effect on Other Students of the Presence of Retarded Students in the School

Teachers in the satellite units were asked to estimate the effect on other students in the school of having the retarded students there. Naturally, it was not possible for these teachers, who had not taught previously in these schools, to be aware of the general atmosphere of the school before their arrival. Nevertheless, no teacher felt unable to comment on this topic since all were able to observe interactions between other students in the school and between these students and their own. Teacher comments are summarized in Table 4.

In Locations 1, 2 and 3 teachers based their comments on positive actions of other students towards retarded students: offers to help; speaking to their students in the hall, etc. From this they concluded that there appeared to be no adverse effect in the school and probably a beneficial effect.

In Location 4, the teachers felt that the effect of the presence of retarded students had not been greatly beneficial. They reported teasing and name calling directed by other students at the retarded students and, for some reason, resentment of the retarded.

In Location 2, one teacher felt that it had been beneficial that some of his students had previously attended the school and were recognized when they arrived. A teacher in Location 4 also commented that a number of students in her class had previously attended the school but felt that their recognition by other students had contributed to poorer relations.

TABLE 4

Effect on Other Students of Presence

of Retarded Students in School

Location	Teacher Comment
1	Good. Other students offer to help in class.
2	Good. Other students becoming more tolerant. Regular students turned out to watch floor hockey tournament.
3	Good. Other students volunteer to help in class. Speak to retarded students in the hall.
4	Much name calling. Resentment by other students.

B) Teacher Interview, Part 2

i) Integration of Individual Students in Other Classes

A student was considered to have been integrated if he joined another class for instructional purposes for at least one period each week. Results are shown in Table 5.

It was not expected that all students would be integrated. The amount of integration for Opportunity Class students is generally low. What is most surprising is that Location 3 contributed almost two-thirds of all the integration which did take place, with nine students out of ten integrated, generally for physical education. The only student not integrated was physically handicapped and the teacher hoped to integrate him at a later date.

The teacher in Location 3 had approached other teachers individually and obtained agreement for integration for a trial period. Following this period integration was continued in all cases.

The experience of this teacher suggests that more integration may be possible than had been anticipated.

In contrast to Locations 1 and 2 which had a level of integration which is closer to that which we would probably expect, Location 4 had no students who were integrated although there were students who were considered to be high functioning.

ii) The Extent of Play Between Retarded and Non-Retarded Students

On the basis of their observations of their students in the yard, teachers estimated, for each student, the extent of play

TABLE 5

Integration of Individual Students in Other Classes[1]

Location	Integration	Not Integrated	Total
1	3	14	17
2	2	15	17
3	9	1	10
4	0	17	17
All Locations	14 (23)[2]	47 (77)	61

1 Students integrated for at least one period per week.

2 Percentage in brackets.

with students in other programs. Table 6 shows that about one-third of students were reported as having no play with non-retarded students. In a number of these cases, the student did not play with anyone at all. A surprising number of students were reported as playing mainly or completely with non-retarded students. Teachers were in agreement that the amount of play was closely related to the functioning level of the retarded student.

Location 4 contributed more than half of the students who did not play with non-retarded students.

These results suggest that, while there was little formal integration of students (except in Location 3), informal integration did take place outside the class.

iii) Changes in Behaviour in the Yard and in Class of Students Previously in the Centralized Program

Teachers were asked to compare the present behaviour of their students with the behaviour which they remembered from the centralized location. This is far from an objective measure. However, it was felt that the teacher's perceptions of changes would be more important in influencing their attitudes to the program than actual measures of behaviour changes.

It should also be recognized that any changes which did take place could have been the result of maturation. However, one teacher was quite emphatic that, on the whole, the students behaved better and more appropriately than had students of the same age in the centralized program.

Teachers discriminated between behaviour in the yard and in class. In a number of cases, change was reported in one

TABLE 6

Extent of Play With Non-Retarded Students

Location	None	Some	Equal	Mainly	Completely	Total
1	4	7	5	0	1	17
2	1	2	6	6	2	17
3	5	1	1	1	2	10
4	12	3	1	1	0	17
All Locations	22(36)[1]	13(21)	13(21)	8(13)	5(8)	61

1 Percentage in brackets.

setting and not in another, and even improvement in one and deterioration in another.

Details of the number of students reported as showing a change in behaviour are given in Tables 7 and 8.

As with other reports, the largest negative results were found in Location 4 which contributed 71 per cent of all students showing worse behaviour in the yeard and 50 per cent of those reported showing worse behaviour in class.

iv) Other Changes

Although a number of other changes were reported, such as more attention to personal hygiene and improved toileting habits, it seemed quite likely in each case that the change was due to maturation rather than the change in program location.

INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS

A) Transportation

In setting up the satellite programs it had been decided that a retarded student would ride regular school busses in any case where a student from his area would normally ride the regular bus to that school. In fact, this is still a rare occurrence since only eight of the students who were still in the program after two years were in a position to be transported by regular bus. Most students must be transported by minibus or by taxi. Details of the type of transportation are shown in Table 9.

Of more importance than the type of transportation to be used was the need to reduce the amount of time spent on the school bus. Parents were

TABLE 7

Changes in Behaviour in the Yard

Location	Worse	Same	Better
1	0	10	1
2	1	8	4
3	1	3	1
4	5	8	0
All Locations	7(17)[1]	29(69)	6(14)

1 Percentage in brackets.

TABLE 8

Changes in Behaviour in Class

Location	Worse	Same	Better
1		5	6
2	1	7	5
3	1	3	1
4	2	9	2
All Locations	4(10)[1]	24(57)	14(33)

1 Percentage in brackets.

TABLE 9

Types of Transportation Used

Location	Regular Bus	Mini-bus	Taxi	Walks or Rides Bike[1]
1		11		
2	7		6	2
3	1		4	2
4		13		4
All Locations	8	24	10	8

1 For at least part of the year; at other times uses Board transportation.

asked how much later their children left for school under the new arrangements. For students close to the city of Chatham there was no difference since they had always been the last to be picked up. The mean reduction in time reported for the two locations outside Chatham was 52 and 40 minutes. It seems likely that a number of parents overestimated the difference in pick-up times since one parent reported that his child was picked up 90 minutes later than before! This seems most unlikely. It is clear, however, that a significant reduction has been made in travelling time for these students Because bussing time has been reduced, student generally have a longer school day.

Parents of students who were travelling by regular bus reported a few problems, particularly of teasing, but there was no evidence that those problems were of a serious nature.

Prior to the change in program location no retarded students made their own way to school. A number of students who live close to the satellite locations now walk or ride bikes to school for at least part of the year.

8) Adjustment to the New School

i) Problems Experienced at the Beginning

Parents were asked whether their children had experienced any adjustment problems following the transfer to the new program and whether these problems were still continuing. Responses of parents are shown in Table 10.

Once again, Location 4 contributed the majority of these cases, with two thirds of all students reported as having experienced problems being in that location.

Overall it appears that the change of program had little adverse effect on the students.

TABLE 10

Adjustment to the New School Setting

Location	Experienced Problems Initially	Still Experiencing Problems
1	No 10 (91)[1] Yes 1 (9)	0
2	No 12 (92) Yes 1 (8)	1
3	No 4 (80) Yes 1 (20)	0
4	No 7 (54) Yes 6 (46)	3
All Locations	No 33 (79) Yes 9 (21)	4

1 Percentage in brackets.

ii) School Preference

Since it was felt that school preference, as expressed by the child, would be an indicator of adjustment, parents were asked about this. The extent to which parents felt aware of the preference of their children for one school or another was surprising. Of course, it is not known how explicitly the student expressed his preference. However, a number of parents stated that they could not tell because their children were largely non-verbal and did not express a preference. It is assumed that the other parents had some indication from their children of preference. Very few students seemed to prefer their previous school. This may well be a normal reaction of children. Since they have no control over which school they attend, it may be that they simply develop a liking for the school they are obliged to attend. Moreover, the question was asked two years after the transfer and students may well have forgotten much about their previous school. School preferences are shown in Table 11.

iii) Friends Outside the Class for the Retarded

Parents were asked whether their children had made friends with students from classes other than those for the retarded. Once again parents were surprisingly clear and definite in their opinions. The responses of parents are shown in Table 12.

Almost one-half of student were reported as having made friends among the non-retarded. As with school preference, a number of parents could not be certain because their children were largely non-verbal.

TABLE 11

School Preference

Preference	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4	All Locations
Present School	10 (91)[1]	9 (69)	4 (80)	7 (54)	30 (71)
Previous School	0 (0)	1 (8)	1 (20)	1 (8)	3 (7)
No Preference	1 (9)	3 (23)	0 (0)	5 (38)	9 (21)

1 Percentage in brackets.

TABLE 12

Friends Outside Class for the Retarded

Number of Friends	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4	All Locations
Some	4 (36)[1]	9 (69)	3 (60)	3 (23)	19 (45)
None[2]	7 (64)	4 (31)	2 (40)	10 (77)	23 (55)

1 Percentage in brackets.

2 Includes parents who did not know.

As a check in the accuracy of parent responses to this item, a comparison was made with the report of the teacher on play with the non-retarded. Looking at those cases where parents had felt able to comment, there was agreement in 84 per cent of cases between the parent's opinion and the teacher's observation of play. There were few instances where the parent reported that the child had made friends and the teacher reported that there was no play. In fact, the disagreements tended to occur where the parent reported no friendships and the teacher reported on at least some play.

Naturally, there is some discrepancy between the question asked of teachers and parents. However, it does appear that parents' perceptions largely coincide with those of teachers. It seems possible that retarded students are able to give more information to parents about their school life than we realize.

While Location 4 still presents the worst picture, most disagreement between parents and teachers was found for Location 2.

C) Adjustment at Home

Of particular interest was the possible effect on behaviour at home of the new arrangements, since it was felt that this would be an important factor in determining parent acceptance. Results are reported in Table 13 for the parents' perceptions of changes in behaviour at home and changes in the child's relations with other members of his family.

Not surprisingly, most students showed no change. A number of students were reported as being more poorly behaved. Of these, 50 per cent were found to be in Location 4. There was almost equality between those reported as

TABLE 13

Changes in Behaviour at Home and in Relations With Other Family Members

Type of Change	Direction of Change	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4	Total
Changes In Behaviour	No change	5 (45)[1]	7 (54)	3 (60)	8 (62)	23 (55)
	Better	4 (36)	5 (38)	1 (20)	1 (8)	11 (26)
	Worse	2 (18)	1 (8)	1 (20)	4 (31)	8 (19)
Changes In Relations With Other Family Members	No change	9 (82)	9 (69)	5 (100)	7 (54)	30 (71)
	Better	2 (18)	4 (31)		4 (31)	10 (24)
	Worse				2 (15)	2 (5)

1 Percentage in brackets.

showing improvement and those showing deterioration.

Several parents claimed that their children had shown a great improvement which they attributed to the change in program. For example, one parent reported that her son had been receiving Ritalin, which was discontinued after the change. Another felt that there had been a rapid growth in maturity in her son soon after the change.

Somewhat surprisingly, the results for the question on relations with family members were rather different from those on behaviour. One quarter of parents claimed that there had been an improvement in relations between the child and other members of the family. Only two students were reported as having worse relations with family members. Both were from Location 4.

D) Attitude of Parents Towards the Satellite Program

1) Feelings of Parents Before and After the Change of Program Location

As noted earlier, a number of parents were clearly apprehensive about the change in program location when this was announced. Parents were asked how they had felt about the program and how they felt now, two years later. Results are shown in Table 14. There is no certainty that parents were able to recall clearly how they had felt. Yet two years later, almost half of the parents stated that they had been unhappy or concerned. It might be suggested that a parent who had been unhappy but who was now pleased would be less likely to remember these earlier feelings. If that were so, the degree to which the group changed its opinion might be even more pronounced than is suggested by the results.

The proportion of parents who were unhappy with the program dropped from 43 per cent to 12 per cent. Of these five parents,

TABLE 14

Feelings of Parents Before and After
the Change of Program Location

Reaction to Change	Location 1		Location 2		Location 3		Location 4		All Locations	
	Before	Now	Before	Now	Before	Now	Before	Now	Before	Now
Pleased	5 (45)[1]	11 (100)	6 (46)	11 (85)	4(80)	5(100)	5(38)	8(62)	20(48)	35(83)
Unhappy/ Concerned	6 (55)	0	6 (46)	2 (15)	1(20)	0	5(38)	3(23)	18(43)	5(12)
No Feelings	0	0	1 (8)	0	0	0	3(23)	2(15)	4(10)	2(5)

1 Percentage in brackets.

three had children in Location 4.

It is clear that satisfaction with the satellite program, as reported by parents, showed a significant increase over the two years of operation.

ii) Parental Feelings About Needed Changes in the Program

Almost one half of the parents of students in Location 4 felt that changes were needed in the program. These parents constituted 60 per cent of all parents who felt that changes should be made. Results are shown in Table 15.

While 40 per cent of parents in Location 3 felt that changes were required, the number in this location are too small to allow for any definite conclusion.

Parents of students in Location 4 were not necessarily realistic in the changes they wished to see. It is possible that they do not fully understand the program their children are in, although all were placed several years ago. Neverthless, it is of concern that such a high proportion of parents express these feelings about this particular location.

TABLE 15

Expression by Parents of a Need for Change
In Their Child's Program

	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3	Location 4	All Locations
No Change Needed	10 (91)[1]	12 (92)	3 (60)	7 (54)	32 (76)
Changes Needed	1 (9)	1 (8)	2 (40)	6 (46)	10 (24)

1 Percentage in brackets.

CONCLUSIONS

The change of program location which was implemented for retarded students was generally perceived by teachers and parents as being very successful. Parents who had expressed concern about the change when it was accounced are now pleased that it took place.

Some integration of individual students has taken place and, in two of the locations, was at the level which might have been expected. However, the fact that so much integration was found to be possible in another location suggests that more may be done than would have been expected.

It is clear that integration does not just happen and specific efforts have to be made. The variation in integration among locations suggests that ensuring the maximum amount of integration may require supervision of the programs by a person with specific responsibility in this area. This person could also be closely involved with teachers in the preparation of a common curriculum for which teachers expressed an urgent need.

The results show a surprising level of integration in play and it may be that this type of integration is more beneficial to both retarded and non-retarded students than in-class integration.

As might be expected when such a move is made, success was not found in all locations and it is clear from the results that there are problems to be overcome in one location. It is not clear why these problems have occurred. It is quite likely that there is a combination of causes rather than one unique area of difficulty. The existence of these problems again indicates the need for ongoing supervision.

All changes involve some cost and this change is no exception. In the centralized program, groups could be formed which were relatively homogeneous. In the satellite locations this is less easy and the basic grouping is

determined by age. Even with the two-class units, this still gives a large age range and an even greater range of ability.

With a centralized program, a student who moves within the county encounters no change in his school situation. With the satellite program a change of residence frequently means a change of school. This has created a desire in teachers for a common curriculum so that programs are similar in each location.

The results of the teacher and parent interviews suggest that both teachers and parents have favourable perceptions of the satellite programs. It can be accepted that the placement of classes for the retarded in regular elementary schools is one solution to the problem of allowing opportunities for integration of the retarded student while continuing to provide specialized instruction in a low enrolment class.